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SUBJECT: CROWN PRINCE BILLAH AND LEE KUAN YEW DISCUSS BRUNEI AND  
SINGAPORE'S TIES

#### SUMMARY

1.(SBU) On February 25th, Ambassador Todd attended a lecture given by Singapore's Minister Mentor, Lee Kuan Yew. Brunei's Crown Prince Billah provided the introduction. Both focused on the importance that Brunei's late Sultan played in Brunei's independence, while emphasizing the close ties that Singapore shares with Brunei. While still in command of the subject matter, Lee Kuan Yew's deteriorating health was evident. Of note, Brunei's Crown Prince is showing growing confidence as a public speaker. End Summary.

#### LEE KUAN YEW REFLECTS

12. (SBU) Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew spoke for about one hour. He focused on the special relationship he shared with His Majesty the Sultan's father. He explained that it was the late Sultan who laid the strong foundation "on which the deep and enduring relationship between Brunei and Singapore rests." The two interacted closely and consolidated their relationship as they struggled for independence from the British and Malays, each supporting the other through difficult times in their fight to become mutually sovereign nations. He sees this relationship as still in existence today with His Majesty the Sultan. He continuously stressed the importance of the relationship, the fact that their countries achieved greatness because of their unity in the past, and that their countries will continue to do so through mutual support and common interests and perceptions.

#### LATE SULTAN'S ROLE IN BRUNEI'S INDEPENDENCE

13. (SBU) Lee Kuan Yew and the Crown Prince both focused on the late Sultan's role in Brunei's independence and its political development. As the 28th ruler of the Sultanate, Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien was praised for his role in Brunei's struggle for independence. He successfully pushed through the 1959 Brunei Constitution. Through the Constitution he prolonged Brunei's political survival and socio-economic stability. He fought to maintain the unique monarchical powers of the sultan as the ruler, and while at the same time maintaining a good relationship with the British.

14. (SBU) He also suppressed the 1962 rebellion, rejected the proposed Malayan merger and strengthened Brunei's internal stability and ability to assume the responsibilities for its foreign affairs. The monarchical system was also successfully retained within the South-east Asian region - not necessarily an easy task given that the monarchy was increasingly being seen as the antithesis of modernity.

#### CROWN PRINCE BILLAH CONFIDENTLY PRAISES GRANDFATHER

15. (SBU) As expected, Crown Prince Billah praised his late grandfather in his introduction of Lee Kuan Yew as the key note speaker. He lauded his grandfather's far-reaching vision and

credited him for his great leadership ability. The Crown Prince noted the shared history of Singapore and Brunei. While not a long introduction, he did speak on substantive historical and policy issues, which marks a departure from prior speaking engagements.

#### AMBASSADOR TODD COMMENTS

16. (SBU) The lecture highlighted the strong ties Singapore and Brunei share. However it was the contrast between the two speakers that was of much interest to the audience. Many commented on it to the Ambassador following the lecture. It was clear that Lee Kuan Yew has aged tremendously and at times he was barely audible during his speech. As he left the stage he needed assistance getting down the stairs. However, he had a good command of the facts and subject matter. In contrast, Crown Prince Billah was poised and confident as he spoke in English. The Crown Prince is showing an increased involvement in more substantive issues and speaking out publicly. Granted, the forums and audiences remain very receptive and accommodating. My opinion is that we will see the Crown Prince continue to take a more active public role, especially as his confidence grows in his ability as public speaker.

TODD